

Cheetah, Lion and the Great Race Pen

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This work is cat-approved.

For my beloved Clairee
I miss you more each day



Lion and Cheetah both lived in the jungles of Africa. Their paths crossed often and Lion always treated Cheetah as though he were better than she.

One day Lion said, "I am better than you."

Cheetah said, "You and I are equals."

"No. I am better," Lion insisted.

"We are equals," Cheetah said.

"I challenge you to a race," Lion said, "to determine which of us is better."

"I accept your challenge," Cheetah said.

"The race will be in two weeks," said Lion. "That will give us time to prepare."

For the two weeks before the race, Lion and Cheetah both ate healthy foods and got plenty of exercise. They also walked along the path that the race would follow so they would know which way to go.



The day of the race was gray and a rain misted the horizon. But Lion and Cheetah were both ready.

“We will see which of us is better,” Lion said with a toss of his flame-colored mane.

“I tell you, we are equals,” Cheetah said and walked to the starting line. Her cubs were on the sidelines to cheer her on.

Lion stood beside Cheetah and they waited for the signal to begin.

An elephant marched up to the starting line and faced Lion and Cheetah. He took a deep breath and blew on his trunk. This was the signal to begin.

Lion and Cheetah both took off down the pathway.



First Lion was in front of Cheetah. Then Cheetah was in front of Lion. They traded places many times as they sped through the forest.

As they ran, the mist turned into rain. But Cheetah and Lion still ran through the forest. Lightning flashed and hit some trees nearby. The trees split apart, but Lion and Cheetah ran the race without slowing down.

The first obstacle Lion and Cheetah came to was a waterfall. Cheetah was ahead of Lion and she took a running jump and leaped over the waterfall, all four of her paws touching solid ground. Cheetah did not slow down but kept running because she knew that, any minute, Lion would catch up with her.





Lion then came to the waterfall. He, too, took a running jump and leaped over the waterfall. But in the middle of the jump, a strong wind blew Lion off course. He landed with his front paws on the shore and the rest of him in the water.

Lion gave out a mighty roar as he struggled against the current. It was a roar Cheetah heard, even though she was quite ahead of Lion. She stopped and listened for a moment. When she heard the roar again, she turned and raced back to the waterfall.

When she reached the waterfall and saw the trouble Lion was in, she extended her paws to help him.

“What are you doing here?” Lion growled.

“You are in trouble,” Cheetah said, “and I am here to help you.”

“I don’t need your help,” Lion said. Even as he said it, his grip on the shore slipped.



“Do not be stubborn, Lion,” Cheetah said. “Let me help you.” She extended her paws once more.

Lion did not need to be told a second time. He quickly reached out his own paws and grasped hers. Cheetah pulled until Lion was safely out of the water.

They stood there a moment, panting from their efforts, until they had caught their breath.

“You saved my life, Cheetah,” Lion said. “But the race is still on.”

“As it should be,” Cheetah said. They both turned and continued racing down the pathway.

Again, they traded places, Lion first, then Cheetah first. They came to a part of the forest which was so thick and dark from the clouds hanging overhead that they had to slow their efforts in getting through it.



Lightning flashed all around them and thunder rolled through the forest and echoed in the skies. In a bright flash of lightning, a tree in front of them was split in two and came crashing down. Before they realized what was happening, another tree fell on top of that one and then another. They turned, but trees behind them were falling, too. Everywhere they turned, it seemed, trees were falling, blocking their path and the way out of the forest and to the finish line.

Soon, they were both trapped beneath a pile of trees and branches that covered them but left them just enough space to sit up. The trees had formed a cave of sorts and Lion and Cheetah were trapped within it.

Lion and Cheetah were too shocked to say anything at first. Lion opened his mouth to roar, but Cheetah stopped him.



“Listen,” Cheetah said.

Outside the tree-cave they could hear, above the roar of wind and rain and thunder, a pawing and scratching sound. Cheetah and Lion sniffed the air. Lion cringed.

“Hyenas,” Lion said. Lion grit his teeth. “I hate hyenas.”

“Shhh,” Cheetah said. “Be quiet. They may be able to get in even though we cannot get out.”

Lion saw the logic in Cheetah’s thinking. The hyenas were much smaller than either Lion or Cheetah and might be able to find a space large enough for them to crawl into the tree-cave. Neither Lion nor Cheetah could fight the hyenas very well in such a small space.



“And what are we going to do?” Lion asked in a whisper.

“We will have to work together,” Cheetah said. “It will take both of us to move these trees to make an opening large enough for both of us to get out. And we will both have to fight off the hyenas when we do get out.”

“Yes,” said Lion and nodded his head. “It is important that we work together on this if we both are to survive.”

“Look around,” said Cheetah. “Find a place where you and I can crash through and surprise them.”

Lion and Cheetah looked around at the tangled trees and branches.

“Here!” Lion said. “Here is a good place.”

Cheetah looked at the place Lion had found and decided it was the best they could do.

“Count to three,” Cheetah told Lion. “On three, we will crash through the trees together and take the hyenas by surprise.”



And so Lion counted to three and he and Cheetah crashed through the trees. Just outside, waiting on them, was a pack of hyenas and the hyenas were on Lion and Cheetah almost before they even realized the hyenas were there.

But Lion and Cheetah were both experienced fighters, especially when it came to their natural enemy, the hyena. Before long, Lion and Cheetah had most of the hyenas on the run, except for a few hyenas who were almost as good at fighting as Lion and Cheetah.

Loud thunder crashed overhead and a bright bolt of lightning struck the pile of trees where Lion and Cheetah were prisoners only moments before. The pile of trees and branches caught fire, sending the hyenas running in one direction and Lion and Cheetah in another direction.



Lion was ahead of Cheetah, but Cheetah was not far behind. But the fire spread quickly and ran in between Lion and Cheetah so that Cheetah had to stop in her tracks and look for another way out of the forest.

Lion soon realized Cheetah was no longer behind him. At first, Lion wanted to continue running so he could win the race. But then he remembered his struggle at the waterfall and that Cheetah had come back to help him.

Lion stopped in his tracks and ran back the way he had come. He came to the wall of fire that was raging ever more rapidly. But he could see, through the flames, Cheetah, pacing back and forth, searching for a way through. Lion could also see, in the midst of the fire, a large boulder. Lion walked over to stand in front of the boulder.



“This way!” Lion cried. “To the boulder, Cheetah!”

Cheetah followed the sound of Lion’s voice. She spotted the boulder and leaped on top of it. As the flames continued to grow and rage, she jumped from the boulder across the tops of the flames to safety on the other side of the fire.

“Thank you, Lion,” Cheetah said. “You saved my life.”

“That makes us even,” Lion said with a smile.

“Yes, but the race is still on,” said Cheetah.

“As it should be,” Lion said.



They raced through the forest away from the fire.

The finish line was not far once they were out of the forest. Cheetah's paw landed across the finish line only a second before the paw of Lion.

The crowd at the finish line cheered and roared in the pouring rain. Cheetah's cubs jumped onto their mother's back to show their enthusiasm.

Lion's voice could be heard above the roar of the crowd. When he spoke, everyone became silent.

"Cheetah!" Lion said.

Cheetah stood and faced Lion.

"Congratulations," Lion said. "You won the race fairly. And you ran a good race as well."

"Thank you, Lion," Cheetah said. "But I feel that we have both won the race."



“Cheetah,” Lion said. “You won the race. But your actions during the race have made you the true winner. You helped me, even when I refused your help. You taught me that, by working together, we could overcome the obstacles we faced. You have proven that you are the superior one of us.”

Cheetah shook her head. “No. Not superior, Lion. Equal.”

Lion smiled and nodded his head. “Equal, then.”

From that day forward, each time Lion encountered Cheetah in the forest, he nodded his head to her in respectful acknowledgment.

About the Author

Bitten by the writing bug at the age of ten, Pen is an avid reader in addition to being a prolific writer. A native Georgian she lived in Hollywood, California for a year and a half (pursuing Film Studies – an interesting distraction) and six weeks in Asheville, NC (attempting to get herself together).

Influenced by the world around her, Pen writes whatever comes into her fuzzy little red head (currently Vidal Sassoon Merlot Vibrant Red). She writes in no specific genre as she has a variety of interests and passions about which to write.

Pen has suffered from Hidradenitis Suppurativa most of her adult life. However, she was not diagnosed with this affliction until 2012 due to the ignorance of the medical profession. She hopes to receive medical treatment soon for Stage 3 HS.

Pen resides in the Atlanta, Georgia area where she spends as much time as possible writing. She is currently awaiting adoption by a new feline/felines.

She may be contacted via the contact form on her website www.pensen.wix.com/neros-fiddle. You may also visit www.penspen.wix.com/hswarrior.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Pen' followed by a long, horizontal flourish.

Pen

From the Author

Dear Reader:

I suffer from an affliction known as Hidradenitis Suppurativa, also known as HS or Acne Inversa. You've probably never heard of it. That's okay. Neither have most doctors.

HS is a foul skin condition where huge lumps form beneath the skin in sensitive areas: beneath arms and breasts, along the groin and buttocks. These lumps can grow to be as large as golf balls. They drain constantly and are painful to the point of limiting mobility and debilitation.

HS is not contagious. The cause is unknown and there is no cure. Currently, there is no research being conducted into finding a cure.

This malady not only attacks on a physical level, it assaults a person's emotional and mental states as well. Embarrassment, shame, guilt, depression, isolation, loss of self-worth and self-esteem prevent many people from even discussing their illness.

Conservative estimates state that between 1% and 4% of the world's population suffers from HS. That doesn't sound like much, until you crunch the numbers: anywhere from 74,000,000 to 296,000,000 people. To put this into perspective, the population of the United States is 318,000,000.

Theoretically, HS has the power to cripple an entire nation.

I state the estimates are conservative because many people are misdiagnosed due to doctors not understanding or even knowing about Hidradenitis Suppurativa. And there are people too embarrassed or ashamed to discuss this condition with their doctors.

There is no test to determine HS because there is no research. There is no research because there is little awareness of HS among the population and little compassion for HS patients in the medical community.

And it is a vicious cycle.

Despite the debilitation of this illness, many of us HS sufferers do our best to maintain some semblance of a normal life. We go about our daily routine despite the pain, not only from our own determination, but because it is expected of us. For whatever reason, many people refuse to believe how painful and debilitating these lumps are. They don't understand how we may not appear sick but inside we are exhausted and in pain.

We call ourselves Warriors because we fight daily to have as normal lives as possible.

There is a good chance, dear reader, that you know someone who suffers from HS. And yet you may not even be aware of it.

Please learn about this affliction. And if you do know someone, please offer them compassion and understanding for what they are enduring.

And be thankful you yourself do not endure it.

Because I wouldn't wish HS on anyone.

Thank you.

Respectfully,



Pen

www.hsawareness.org

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To learn more about Hidradenitis Suppurativa (a debilitating affliction I and millions of others struggle with daily), visit

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